

Ideas for Inspiring Active Learning

English Roundtable Web Chat

May 11th, 2010

Regional English Language Office, U.S. Embassy,
Beijing



Here are some points for today's discussion
that are taken from the book:

Ideas from Inspiring Active Learners
A Complete Handbook for Today's Teachers

by Merrill Harmin with Melanie Toth

from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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-- a book from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 2006

Five Key Student Abilities – DESCAs:

All students have an inherent ability to live with *DIGNITY*, to engage tasks with *ENERGY*, to be appropriately *SELF-MANAGING*, to work in *COMMUNITY* with at least some others, and to be *AWARE* of what is going on around them. Collectively, these **DESCA** abilities point to the heart of students' best, most productive selves.

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Major categories discussed in the book on how to inspire active learning:

- Strategies for Starting Classes Efficiently
- Strategies for Presenting New Content
- Strategies for Helping Students Master Content
- Strategies for Ending Classes Efficiently
- Strategies for Further Advancing Teacher Effectiveness
- Strategies for Evaluating Student Learning

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Strategies for Helping Students Master Content:

Let's say we've presented material to students, perhaps by asking them to read something for homework, or by explaining it in class. Can we now assume that students fully grasp it? Hardly. Almost always we must also help students think about the material, interact with it, practice it, digest it, make their own.

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- Strategies for Helping Students Master Content (*continued*):
 - Clarifying Questions:
 - What was new or interesting to you?
 - What or whom does it remind you?
 - What questions does it bring to mind?
 - Was there anything surprising?
 - Was there something in it that was pleasing or displeasing?
 - Does it stir any memories?
 - Does it suggest any changes that are worth considering?
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- Strategies for Helping Students Master Content(*continued*):

- Language to Advance Thinking:

If a student says...

- ❖ It never happened.
- ❖ The answer is 72.
- ❖ I don't know how to do that.
- ❖ I hate to read that stuff.
- ❖ I didn't finish the work.

We might say...

- Never, ever?
- Tell us some of the steps that led to that answer.
- What do you know about doing it?
- What makes you hate it?
- What do you need to think about to do better next time?

Instead of saying "Why did you do that?", we might say "do you know what led you to do that?"

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- **Strategies for Further Advancing Teacher Effectiveness**

- To help students read better.

If we were to ask a group of adult excellent readers how they read a text, we would likely get a variety of answers. Some read carefully, word by word. Some outline readings. Some skim first, then choose how to proceed. Many say it depends on the reading and their purposes; for a well-written text, they may choose one approach, for a poorly written text, another.

The point is: It is intelligent to choose how to read in a way that suits you and the task at hand.

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More about the book:

The authors present an array of research-based, teacher-tested strategies for managing our everyday responsibilities- from beginning a class to grading homework, from instructing large groups to promoting diligent seatwork, from motivating slackers to handling disrupters. These strategies focus on mutual respect, not bossiness; collaboration, not isolation; commitment to learning, not fear of failure; and the dignity of all, not praise or rewards for a few.